

**CITY OF JOHN DAY  
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES  
JOHN DAY, OREGON**

September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**COUCILORS PRESENT:**

Heather Rookstool, Mayor  
David Holland, Council President  
Chris Labhart, Councilor  
Eric Bush, Councilor  
Edwin Newby, Councilor  
Ron Phillips, Councilor  
Sherrie Rininger, Councilor

**COUNCILORS ABSENT:**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Casey Myers, Public Works Director  
Savannah Lovell, Records Clerk  
Don Gabbard, Fire Chief  
Shirley Manca  
Sarah Wright (Virtual)

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Jon Meiling	John Morris
John Rowell	Charlene Morris
Jody Moulton	Richard Holland
Joyce Nodine	Kim Holland
Tammy Bremner	Justin Davis
Bob Pereira	Shannon Adair
Steph Allen	Terry Davison
Beth Spell	Kathy Stoddard

**Agenda Item No. 1—Call Meeting to Order**

Mayor Rookstool called the city council meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**Agenda Item No. 2—Pledge of Allegiance**

The City Council stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Agenda Item No. 3—Roll Call and Attendance**

Mayor Rookstool noted that all councilors were present.

**Agenda Item No. 4—Amend or Accept Regular Agenda**

Mayor Rookstool would like to add to the consent agenda the agreement from Community Connections to extend the low-income water assistance program. This needs to be renewed every 6 months.

***Councilor Rininger made a motion to accept the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilor Bush and passed unanimously.***

### **Agenda Item No. 5—Consent Agenda**

Items on the consent agenda for approval:

- a) Approval of Check Register
- b) Approval of Council Minutes 9/12
- c) Low Income Water Assistance

On the minutes from September 12<sup>th</sup> Councilor Holland stated under Agenda Item No. 6—Public Comment, it should say Kathy Stoddard presented a verbal and written complaint. Also, on the last line it should say Councilor Holland has NOT heard anything more from the City Attorney.

***Councilor Labhart made a motion to approve the minutes from September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilor Bush and passed unanimously.***

***Councilor Rininger made a motion to approve the check register. The motion was seconded by Councilor Phillips and it passed unanimously.***

Councilor Labhart asked for a consensus to postpone the Low-Income Water Assistance until the next Council meeting. Councilor Holland stated in the City Charter if the Mayor deems that it is urgent, Council is allowed to vote on it under certain circumstances.

***Councilor Bush made a motion to approve the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program declaring the matter urgent. The motion was seconded by Councilor Labhart and passed unanimously.***

### **Agenda Item No. 6—Public Comments**

Shannon Adair congratulated the new Councilors and said it's nice to see a full house. Shannon stated she has been approached by members of the community that are concerned about the professionalism and lack of transparency of the City's Mayor, Heather Rookstool. As a citizen of John Day, Shannon is asking the Council to discuss these concerns and to address how social media should be used or not by Council and employees for City business. She was deeply offended by what was shared and posted on Facebook. Social Media posting will be added to the agenda on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Beth Spell wanted to address the Low-Income water assistance program that was voted on. It was said that it was a 6-month agreement and would go out of compliance this week. This agreement has already been out of compliance for a month because it was last renewed in February. She asked Council to look into whether the agreement goes 5 months forward or 6 months forward.

Casey Myers gave an update regarding projects that are going to be happening soon. Casey met with ODOT about the ADA ramp improvement, the contractors are going to be starting that within the first 2 weeks of October. They will be starting in Long Creek and heading toward John Day. The East 7<sup>th</sup> Street Project will be starting on Monday September 25<sup>th</sup>.

Steph Allen put in 2 Public Records Requests regarding the investigation. The first one was on August 17<sup>th</sup>, she received a letter back stating the City is the custodian of certain Public Records. On the same day the Blue Mountain Eagle got a response to their Public Record Request stating the City may be the custodian of certain Public Records. On her second Public Records Request regarding the investigation she received a response stating the City is not the custodian of any parts. The City paid \$5,661.90 for this investigation so she would like to know whether the City owns these or not. She asked if the employees who were affected by the investigation should have these records in their personnel file.

## Agenda Item No. 7—Action Items

### a. Rest Stop Naming and Signage

Councilor Labhart would like the Council to name the public restrooms “Rest Stop” or “Rest Area” and put a sign up that people can see.

*Councilor Labhart made a motion to purchase two signs stating “Rest Area” to be put up facing both directions at the restrooms on Main Street. The motion was seconded by Councilor Rininger and passed unanimously.*

### b. Mayor complaint filed by Kathy Stoddard

The City Attorney contacted Councilor Holland last week to discuss the complaint against Mayor Rookstool. Council has a couple different options. They can choose to do nothing or they can choose to initiate an official investigation, similar to the previous investigation. Councilor Holland’s opinion is to pursue a formal investigation so it is fair for everyone.

Councilor Rininger personally would not like to spend \$2,000 on this. She stated she spoke to the 4H people about it and they said nobody was harmed by it and nobody else complained about it. Councilor Holland stated this was regarding City employees and there were people harmed by it.

Due to the nature of this complaint Councilor Bush doesn’t believe it would be a good use of tax payer money to do an investigation. Councilor Phillips considers it a lesson learned with no further action from Council. Councilor Labhart agreed with Councilor Bush and asked consensus from Council to take no further action at this time. Council came to a consensus minus Councilor Holland who disagreed.

Savannah Lovell stated there were multiple staff members that were harmed by what has been said.

Kathy Stoddard asked Mayor Rookstool if she apologized to her or the child that was there during this conversation. She had to explain to a child why the Mayor was talking about getting rid of people in the City.

### c. Discussion regarding Council President

Coming into this agenda item Councilor Holland requested that the discussion over this issue be based on what is laid out in the City Charter as the duties and responsibilities of the Council President. Not by personal opinion of what those duties should or shouldn’t be.

Councilor Labhart stated it was a unanimous decision to appoint Councilor Holland as Council President, 3 of those votes came from Councilors that are still there.

Councilor Rininger feels like Councilor Holland is exceeding his boundaries as Councilor President. One of those reasons being him signing his name on a theft complaint against Councilor Phillips. Councilor Holland stated that letter was signed by him at the request of Councilor Labhart who was the one who filed the letter. Mayor Rookstool informed Councilor Labhart that the only 2 people who have the authority to sign the letter are herself and Councilor Holland which is why Councilor Holland signed it.

On August 28<sup>th</sup> there was a text sent out to all Councilors about holding an executive session to discuss City Manager applications, Councilor Rininger said Councilor Holland never responded. Councilor Holland stated he was out of cell service and informed and Mayor Rookstool confirmed he did leave a voicemail.

Councilor Rininger apologized to Councilor Holland saying she didn't mean to offend him in any way and she does respect him.

d. **LOC (League of Oregon Cities)**

*Councilor Labhart made a motion to appoint Councilor Bush as our representative to the League of Oregon Cities. The motion was seconded by Councilor Rininger and passed unanimously.*

e. **AP/Payroll position**

*Councilor Labhart made a motion that the City enters into an agreement with Shirley Manca as Senior Account Clerk for 3 months. The motion was seconded by Councilor Rininger and passed unanimously.*

f. **City Attorney present at meetings**

Councilor Bush spoke with the City Attorney regarding possibly being present at Council meetings. He believes the City could potentially save money and have better legal access if the City Attorney was on a retainer. Council came to a consensus table this discussion until there is a City Manager on board to consider it in the future.

g. **Grant County Digital Board update**

Elliot Sky was the Council Representative for Grant County Digital since he is no longer a Councilor, Grant County Digital needs a new representative from the Council.

Start—1:23:25 End—1:40:20

Council came to a consensus to table this topic.

h. **R3 Update**

Burns, John Day, Lakeview and Baker City are all officially in R3 and had their first official meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

Start—1:40:20 End—1:50:40

i. **Maintaining public records and recordings**

Councilor Rininger would like to see recordings from the Council meetings be kept on the server indefinitely. Savannah Lovell, stated that this is already being done because Mayor Rookstool requested we start doing this in March. Council came to a consensus to table this until a City Manager is hired.

j. **City Manager Update Interview/Meet and Greet October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Mayor Rookstool invited the community to a Meet and Greet for the City Manager position on October 6<sup>th</sup> at 8am before the interviews are held. There are 4 candidates that Council will interview.

k. **Approval of Invoicing**

Robert Gaslin stated that the City of John Day's past practice was always to have the department heads approve and code their own invoices. He said the AP Clerk shouldn't be coding anything, they should double check it but not actually coding anything.

**Agenda Item No. 8—Additional Department, Council or Other Comments**

Casey Myers received a call before the meeting that a large cottonwood tree had fallen over on a bridge. It damaged some of the bridge railing and there will be a bridge inspection.

**Adjourn**

*There being no further business before the council, Councilor Rininger moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 pm. The motion was seconded by Councilor Phillips and passed unanimously.*

Respectfully Submitted:

Heather Rookstool  
Mayor

ACCEPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL ON October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

  
Heather Rookstool, Mayor